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Virginia Department of Housing
and Community Development

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2006 Housing and Rehabilitation Award Winners Named

Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development presented awards during annual conference

Richmond, VA – The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) announced winners Charles McConnell, a native of Wise County, and Peggy Morrison, a native of Abingdon, in the areas of housing and rehabilitation during the 2006 Housing and Rehabilitation Conference Awards Luncheon on Thursday, Aug. 24.

Charles McConnell, executive director of the Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority, received the Carl Rasnic Lifetime Achievement Award. The award is presented each year to someone who has dedicated his or her career to housing and housing rehabilitation, and has made extraordinary contributions to the people he or she serve with a history of successfully implementing projects and contributing to the Virginia housing rehabilitation network.

DHCD Associate Director of Community Development Todd Christensen, who presented the awards, said McConnell “literally moved a mountain and changed the course of a river” during his career. McConnell’s lifetime work has included relocation and rehabilitation of more than 200 homes, and the implementation of numerous projects including the “If I Had a Hammer” project which provided on-the-job training and education to local residents, and which was replicated across the state.

Additionally, McConnell was recognized for the Wise House project, the downtown Coeburn revitalization project, and his involvement in ‘Round the Mountain and the Crooked Road, Virginia’s Heritage Music Trail. McConnell currently serves on the board of the Virginia Housing Development Association and is leading the rehabilitation of the town of Derby.

“It overwhelmed me to receive this award,” said McConnell. “It is an honor to be recognized among this group - this family - of folks involved in housing rehabilitation, who are working to learn together and help each other help those less fortunate to have safe and comfortable homes.”

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Peggy Morrison, president of K.W. Poore and Associates, was presented with the Sparkplug Award, presented each year to a “sparkplug” in the community igniting action and achieving results.

The Sparkplug Award recognizes individuals who have contributed to statewide housing and rehabilitation efforts, and whose energy and resolve brings them to accomplish the extraordinary and noteworthy against difficult odds – such as Morrison’s achievement of successfully obtaining funding for Phase One of the Smithfield/Pinewood Heights project, which will permanently relocate 31 low- and moderate-income households into safe and affordable standard housing.

“The winner of this award has shown unrelenting and persistent determination,” said Christenson before announcing the winner. “She does not shy away from tough projects and has proven herself a driving force in making impossible projects do-able.”

Morrison’s achievements include major rehabilitations in Franklin, Stuart, Abingdon and Martinsville, as well as developing a depth of regulatory knowledge and using this knowledge to brainstorm ideas and find ways to bring progress to each community she works in.

“It is an honor to receive this award. The positive impact we try to make for people is really a team effort,” said Morrison. “We still have families living in substandard housing around the state, and I look forward to working in this field for many more years to help those less fortunate.”

These awards are presented each year at the Housing Rehabilitation Workshop, which brings together both public, private and non-profit organizations and individuals dedicated to providing safe and affordable housing for Virginians. In 2005, David Annis with the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission received the Carl Rasnic Lifetime Achievement Award, and Starrie Jordan with Dean and Associates received the Sparkplug Award.

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is committed to creating safe, affordable, and prosperous communities to live, work and do business in Virginia. DHCD partners with Virginia’s communities to develop their economic potential, regulates Virginia’s building and fire codes, provides training and certification for building officials, and invests more than \$100 million each year into housing and community development projects throughout the state. By partnering with local governments, nonprofit groups, state and federal agencies, and others, DHCD is working to improve the quality of life for Virginians.

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